

Claims 1-5 are all the claims pending in the Application.

Rejection of Claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 over Schneider

The Examiner rejected to Claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Schneider (DE 39 28 796). This rejection is traversed.

Claim 1 requires, *inter alia*, a projected portion extending from an end face of said pinion shaft in an axial direction and having a groove formed in a circumferential direction thereof. Schneider discloses an engaging gear for an internal combustion engine starter. Schneider discloses arranging the inner race or groove unstably engaged with the starter pinion so that the starter pinion can easily enter the next tooth-in-recess position of the ring gear. Schneider does not disclose or suggest a projected portion extending from an end face of said pinion shaft in an axial direction, as claimed in claim 1. By way of example, and not by way of limitation, one illustration of such a projected portion is provided in Fig. 1 of the Drawings of the present Application (reference numeral 52). Therefore, Schneider does not disclose or suggest a projected portion extending from an end face of said pinion shaft in an axial direction.

Further, Schneider does not disclose or suggest a projected portion with a groove formed in a circumferential direction thereof. Therefore, Schneider does not disclose or suggest a projected portion having a groove formed in a circumferential direction thereof, as *inter alia*, required by claim 1.

In addition, claim 1 requires a snap ring fitted the groove. The Examiner cites no teaching in Schneider that allegedly discloses or suggests such a feature. Therefore, Schneider does not disclose or suggest every element of claim 1.

Claims 2-4 depend from claim 1, and thus incorporate all of the recitations thereof. Therefore, claims 2-4 are patentably distinguishable over the prior art for at least the reasons that claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the prior art.

Rejection of Claims 1 and 3-5 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 over Lafitte

Claims 1 and 3-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Lafitte U.S. Patent No. 2,960,879. This rejection is traversed.

Claim 1 requires, *inter alia*, a projected portion extending from an end face of said pinion shaft in an axial direction and having a groove formed in a circumferential direction thereof. Lafitte discloses a starting device for a starter motor. Lafitte discloses longitudinal displacement of a pinion mounted on a shaft for starting a motor. Lafitte does not disclose or suggest a projected portion extending from an end face of said pinion shaft in an axial direction. Further, Lafitte does not disclose or suggest a projected portion with a groove formed in a circumferential direction.

Moreover, claim 1 requires a snap ring fitted the groove. The Examiner cites no teaching of Lafitte that allegedly discloses or suggests such a feature. Therefore, Lafitte does not disclose or suggest all the elements of claim 1.

REPLY UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Application No.: 09/881,108

Q64784

Claims 3-5 depend from claim 1, and thus incorporate all of the recitations thereof.
Therefore, claims 3-5 are patentably distinguishable over the prior art for at least the reasons that claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the prior art.

In view of the foregoing remarks, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard C. Turner
Registration No. 29,710

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
2100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037-3213
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

Date: February 7, 2003